

**MINUTES OF A REGULAR MEETING
OF THE AIRPORT COMMISSION**

1. CALL TO ORDER

The Torrance Airport Commission convened in a regular session on Thursday, January 13, 2011 at 7:00 p.m. in the West Annex meeting room at Torrance City Hall.

2. ROLL CALL

Present: Commissioners Dingman, Donnellan, Fitch, Hsiao, Tymczyszyn, and Chairperson Jacobsen.

Absent: Commissioner Orpe.

Also Present: Facility Operations Manager Megerdichian and Business Manager Williams.

MOTION: Commissioner Donnellan moved to grant Commissioner Orpe an excused absence for the January 13, 2011 Airport Commission meeting. Commissioner Tymczyszyn seconded the motion; a voice vote reflected unanimous approval.

3. FLAG SALUTE

Commissioner Donnellan led the Pledge of Allegiance.

4. AFFIDAVIT OF AGENDA POSTING

MOTION: Commissioner Donnellan, seconded by Commissioner Dingman, moved to accept and file the report of the City Clerk on the posting of the agenda for this meeting; a voice vote reflected unanimous approval.

5. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

5A. MINUTES OF DECEMBER 9, 2010

Commissioner Tymczyszyn offered the following clarification to the December 9, 2010 meeting minutes:

Page 3, 7A, paragraph 3: "Commissioner Fitch related her observation that a noise abatement sign is missing from the runway threshold...."

MOTION: Commissioner Fitch moved for the approval of the December 9, 2010 Airport Commission meeting minutes as amended. Commissioner Hsiao seconded the motion; a voice vote reflected unanimous approval (absent Commissioner Orpe).

6. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS #1 AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Chairperson Jacobsen stated that he enjoyed attending the January 13, 2011 reception honoring Commissioner Frank Rizzardi for his 34 years of public service.

7. ACTION ITEMS

7A. REVIEW AND RECOMMEND CHANGES TO HELICOPTER LETTER OF AGREEMENT AS PROPOSED BY HELICOPTER COMMITTEE

Facility Operations Manager Megerdichian provided background regarding the current helicopter Letter of Agreement (LOA) between helicopter operators at Torrance Airport and the FAA Control Tower, the formation of the Helicopter Committee in October 2010, and the five Helicopter Committee meetings held between November 2010 and January 2011 to analyze issues that include helicopter altitudes, noise, and routes. He stated that, while the LOA outlines five helicopter routes, the Committee chose to prioritize which routes to study, based on the amount of residents they affected. The three routes that were identified and studied are the West Pacific Coast Highway route, the Southeast route, and the South Crenshaw route.

He commended Committee members for their time and effort in trying to find solutions to better mitigate noise concerns in and around the City. He introduced Helicopter Committee members in the audience: Commissioner Donnellan, Committee Chairperson Peter Elmore, Ron Hamilton, Steve Polcari, and Richard Root.

Facility Operations Manager Megerdichian presented the Committee's recommendation that the Commission review and recommend changes to the Helicopter LOA that include: 1) Modification to the Southeast route and corresponding language within the LOA; 2) Modification to the South Crenshaw route and corresponding language within the LOA; and 3) Modification to the Pacific Coast Highway route—change to LOA language only. He stated that the Committee further recommends that the FAA evaluate fixed wing routes following the final design of the helicopter routes to ensure no conflict.

He provided descriptions of current and proposed route changes included in the material of record. He noted the following attachments in agenda packets: Attachment A – Current Helicopter LOA; B – Proposed Changes to LOA; C – Map of Current Routes; D – Map of Modified Routes; E – Approved Minutes from November 4 and 17, 2010, December 2 and 14, 2010 Helicopter Committee Meetings; and F – Correspondence from Helicopter Committee Meetings. He distributed a supplemental request from the City of Rancho Palos Verdes to amend the proposed South Crenshaw route to extend it to the shoreline a half mile east rather than a half mile west of the horseshoe, noting that the Committee concurs with the change as it would avoid more residences.

Facility Operations Manager Megerdichian advised that, if the Commission accepts the proposed modifications, the recommendation would be forwarded to City Council for consideration and approval. If approved, the Committee would present the changes to the Southern California Airspace Users Group in February 2011, allowing revisions to be published in the helicopter charts by July 2011. He stated that the Helicopter Committee originally identified 14 topics to study and would continue to meet until all issues are resolved.

Committee Chairperson Elmore, Bluff Street, stated that proposed changes were important not only for the Helicopter LOA but also for publication in helicopter charts, fliers distributed to other airports, as well as City publications, noise abatement procedures, and website. He noted that, by and large, helicopter and fixed wing pilots want to do whatever is best for the community and to have as minimal a footprint and impact environmentally as possible. He stated that Committee members intend to continue meeting to ensure that the changes they are anticipating have occurred.

Responding to Chairperson Jacobsen's observation, Committee Chairperson Elmore concurred that higher altitudes result in an overall wider footprint, but maintained that sound pressure levels and footprint become smaller as the altitude increases. He stated that in his experience higher almost always equates to quieter. He added that Airport controllers would also be given the phraseology they need to use to help ensure compliance.

In response to Chairperson Jacobsen's inquiries, Facility Operations Manager Megerdichian advised that the City plans to request that the FAA look at the route modifications to determine if there are any potential conflicts. He added that, once the changes are approved, the City would begin publishing new noise abatement procedures that include helicopters. He stated that currently the LOA is a voluntary agreement with Torrance Airport only, but by publishing the routes transient operators would also be informed.

When Commissioner Dingman inquired about the potential conflict with the downwind on 29 Left, Mr. Elmore stated that the Air Traffic Manager is aware of the problem and has advised that the Tower has a number of tools it can use to ensure separation.

Commissioner Tymczyszyn stated that he supports the inbound and outbound modifications to the South Crenshaw route. He questioned how large of problem helicopter noise actually is, citing a Daily Breeze online survey and noting that helicopters are not exceeding the City noise limits. He stated that he has no objection with a generic statement in the LOA requesting pilots to fly higher than 600' MSL for noise abatement when consistent with safety.

He expressed concern that the proposed 1,200' inbound and 1,400' outbound altitudes for the West Pacific Coast Highway route are too high. He asserted that slow helicopters in the same altitudes as faster aircraft is unsafe and a collision hazard. He maintained that straight out departing aircraft often drift south due to prevailing winds while maintaining runway heading. He noted that "600' MSL or above" in the current LOA encourages a spread of altitudes between helicopters and fixed wing; therefore, the recommendation of 200' separation is too close together.

Commissioner Tymczyszyn took issue with the accelerated timeline to meet the charting committee deadline. He asserted that solving one perceived problem--helicopter noise--would create a safety hazard; further, that requesting the FAA, post implementation, to evaluate the routes to ensure no conflict should not be done independently.

Referring to the proposed Southeast route, he stated that the recommendation puts arrivals and departures at the same altitude—1,500 feet—on a precise route, in opposite directions. He maintained that the current LOA leaves altitudes and exact routings up to the pilot or Air Traffic Controller, so chances of mid air collisions are greatly reduced. He stated that the proposal puts too much responsibility on controllers. He described collisions that have occurred near Torrance Airport and urged the Commission to consider the effect of a reduction in the margin of safety that mixing helicopters and airplanes represents.

Committee Chairperson Elmore addressed some of Commissioner Tymczyszyn's concerns, providing information about the request to the FAA to evaluate fixed wing routes, the FAA order on environmental impact, change in arrival and departure

procedures, and separation of Class D airspace. He stated that Pacific Coast Highway is generally used as a center divider for helicopter traffic and that pilots know to stay on the right hand side.

In response to Commissioner Hsiao's inquiry, Mr. Elmore explained that 1,200' altitude is being recommended in an attempt to achieve a 65 decibel noise reading without any significant impact to operators. He discussed the three traffic patterns that are standard at every airport because of speed differential: 500' above the ground (mean sea level) for helicopters, 1,000' for small fixed wing aircraft, and 1,500' for high performance twin engine and jet aircraft. He added that Torrance Airport is 100' above sea level, which would mean 600, 1,100, and 1,600 feet altitude.

Commissioner Fitch thanked Airport staff, Helicopter Committee members, and audience participants for their professionalism. She questioned how big of problem helicopter noise really is, commenting that noise levels from gas lawn mowers and blowers are 92+ decibels. She pointed out that noise concerns were not even mentioned in the recommendations presented this evening. She inquired whether it was necessary to publish altitude changes and recommended leaving them as they are.

Facility Operations Manager Megerdichian responded that the Commission could recommend route modifications only.

Mr. Elmore stated that the Committee did everything they could to achieve the task before them—to decrease helicopter noise—and discussed some of the varying viewpoints that the Committee considered.

Commissioner Hsiao recognized Committee members for their time, effort, and commitment. He expressed concern that the Commission was not given the quantitative information needed to support the change in numbers. He further inquired how, if approved, the performance of the implemented recommendations would be evaluated going forward.

Facility Operations Manager Megerdichian stated that, if the changes are approved, the Committee plans to continue meeting to evaluate if implementation has been helpful and also to address other issues and routes in the LOA. He noted that if none of the recommendations are approved, he still recommends presenting existing LOA routes to the Airspace Users Group for publication in the helicopter charts because at present there is nothing.

When Chairperson Jacobsen inquired if the proposed routes alone would mitigate noise, Mr. Elmore responded that the Southeast route would be a noise improvement, altitude withstanding. Referring to the proposed modification to the West Pacific Coast Highway route, he advised that there would be no change whatsoever. He maintained that there would be significant benefit to modifying the South Crenshaw route because it directs helicopters to fly over landslide territory and a park rather than over residences.

Commissioner Tymczyszyn suggested the following revision to the recommendation before it is forwarded to City Council: Page 2, Analysis, paragraph 3, line 7 "...while the revised altitudes state 1,400' or above MSL for departure, and 1,200' or above MSL for arrival." He suggested adding instructions in the LOA about staying on the right side of the road. He stated that he has no problem with a generic statement in the LOA requesting pilots to fly higher than 600' MSL for noise abatement when

consistent with safety. Lastly, he expressed concern about the need to make potentially dangerous changes when he has seen very few residents complain about helicopter noise during his time on the Commission. He recommended that the new routings be included in the LOA with a statement that helicopter pilots are requested to fly higher than 600' MSL for noise abatement when consistent with safety.

Committee Chairperson Elmore stated that there is standard operating procedure recognized by the FAA for pilots to stay on the right side of the road. He pointed out that Robinson Helicopter is doing everything it can to mitigate noise levels including increasing altitudes.

Commissioner Donnellan expressed his appreciation to Committee members. He concurred with Commissioner Tymczyszyn that there have been few complaints about helicopter noise since he has been on the Commission and with Mr. Elmore that Robinson Helicopter is cooperative and sensitive to the needs of the community. He expressed support for approving the modified routes but not changes pertaining to altitude.

Chairperson Jacobsen pointed out that, even though residents may not voice their concerns in person, the significant amount of correspondence in the agenda packet should be taken into consideration.

Richard Root, Via Buena Ventura, thanked the Commission for agreeing to establish the Committee and recognized Commissioners Donnellan, Fitch, and Tymczyszyn for attending meetings. He voiced his support for the recommendations, noting that they are an improvement but not a significant change. Referring to the West Pacific Coast Highway modification, he stated that most Robinson helicopters are already flying at 1,500 feet. He maintained that most of Torrance does not have a problem with helicopter noise and that the problem is isolated to a small area along Pacific Coast Highway. He stated that, according to Helicopter Association International, noise levels should be below 60 decibels to be "neighborly" in low ambient noise areas.

John Bailey, Walnut Avenue, President of Southeast Torrance Homeowners Association, referred to Page 2 of the approved November 4, 2010 Helicopter Committee meeting minutes and Member Hamilton's statement "that he has three years of statistics that shows Robinson helicopters average 65 decibels." He recommended that the Commission request these Robinson Helicopter test results.

Facility Operations Manager Megerdichian provided clarification that these test results were discussed at Committee meetings but were never distributed.

Mr. Bailey commented that the Southeast route is being modified because of complaints by two Rolling Hills residents. He stated that the one good thing that has come out of Committee meetings are changes that the Coast Guard has agreed to make.

Varo Asorian, Denny Road, expressed concern about noise from fixed wing aircraft on weekends. He asserted that safety should be the most important consideration and recommended approving the route modifications but not altitude changes.

Rory Pendley, Portebello Drive, concurred with Commissioner Tymczyszyn about safety concerns with changing the current altitudes.

James Casey, Camino de las Colinas, pointed out that helicopter pilots agreed to all recommendations and that 3:30 p.m. Helicopter Committee meetings made it difficult for residents to participate. He suggested that fixed wing aircraft use King Harbor or Redondo Pier as a visual sight to stay as close as possible within the flight path and to make sure they do not turn before they get to the coast. He maintained that Robinson helicopters frequently fly up to 2,000 feet and that it has never been a safety concern. He pointed out that much of the Riviera area is 285 feet above sea level and that helicopter noise is a daily interruption in his residence.

Commissioner Dingman stated that his residence is 750 MSL and helicopter noise does not bother him.

In response to Commissioner Fitch's inquiry regarding enforcement, Facility Operations Manager Megerdichian provided clarification that this is a voluntary LOA and that there would be no enforcement. He maintained that, if the routes are advertised and published, transient pilots would hopefully be compliant.

Chairperson Jacobsen initiated a brief discussion regarding the relation between speed and noise as well as real and perceived noise.

Commissioner Hsiao suggested recommending route changes but to continue discussion regarding altitudes.

Mr. Elmore stated that there is a noise formula but that environmental factors, such as relative humidity and wind speed, have an effect on noise levels at a given distance.

Commissioner Tymczyszyn offered his observation that Robinson helicopters have been flying higher and maintained that the current flexibility in altitude allows the pilot in command to safely choose the altitude for the conditions that day.

MOTION: Commissioner Tymczyszyn moved to recommend modification of the current Helicopter Letter of Agreement routes to those presented by the Helicopter Committee, that helicopter pilots are requested to fly at 600 feet MSL or higher for noise abatement when consistent with safety, and that crossing restrictions language be left at 600 feet MSL. Commissioner Fitch seconded the motion; a roll call vote reflected unanimous approval.

Facility Operations Manager Megerdichian advised that the item would have to be redrafted but that it does not need to come back to the Commission before going to City Council on February 1, 2011.

The Commission was in recess from 9:45 p.m. to 10:00 p.m.

8. INFORMATION ITEMS

8A. AERONAUTICAL OPERATIONAL INFORMATION UNDER THE PURVIEW OF THE GENERAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT

Chairperson Jacobsen noted that the following reports for January 2011 were included in agenda materials: Hangar and Tie down Rental Status, Ongoing Projects, December Meeting Room Schedule, Hangar Waiting List, Events Requiring Emergency Response, and Airfield Operations Status.

Staff advised that there are now only two hangar vacancies.

Responding to Commissioner Fitch's inquiry about recent rains, Facility Operations Manager Megerdichian stated that drainage at the Airport is very good and that there was no flooding or complaints about potholes.

8B. LAND MANAGEMENT REPORT – AERONAUTICAL

No report.

8C. NOISE ABATEMENT QUARTERLY REPORT

Facility Operations Manager Megerdichian reported that the Noise Abatement Quarterly Report would be submitted next month with changes requested by the Commission.

9. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS #2

9A. Commissioners and staff expressed their appreciation to Commissioner Tymczyszyn for his nine and a half years of service on the Commission and bid him a fond farewell.

Commissioner Tymczyszyn stated that it was a pleasure to be on the Commission, working with fellow Commissioners, and that he learned a lot. He discussed some of the successes and regrets that he experienced during his tenure. He particularly recommended resuming Torrance Air Fairs to allow local citizens to come onto and learn more about the Airport.

10. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: At 10:25 p.m., Commissioner Fitch moved to adjourn the meeting to Thursday, February 10, 2011 in the West Annex meeting room at 7:00 p.m. Commissioner Tymczyszyn seconded the motion and, hearing no objection, Chairperson Jacobsen so ordered.

Approved as Amended February 10, 2011 s/ Sue Herbers, City Clerk
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